

Buckingham Palace guide for autistic visitors

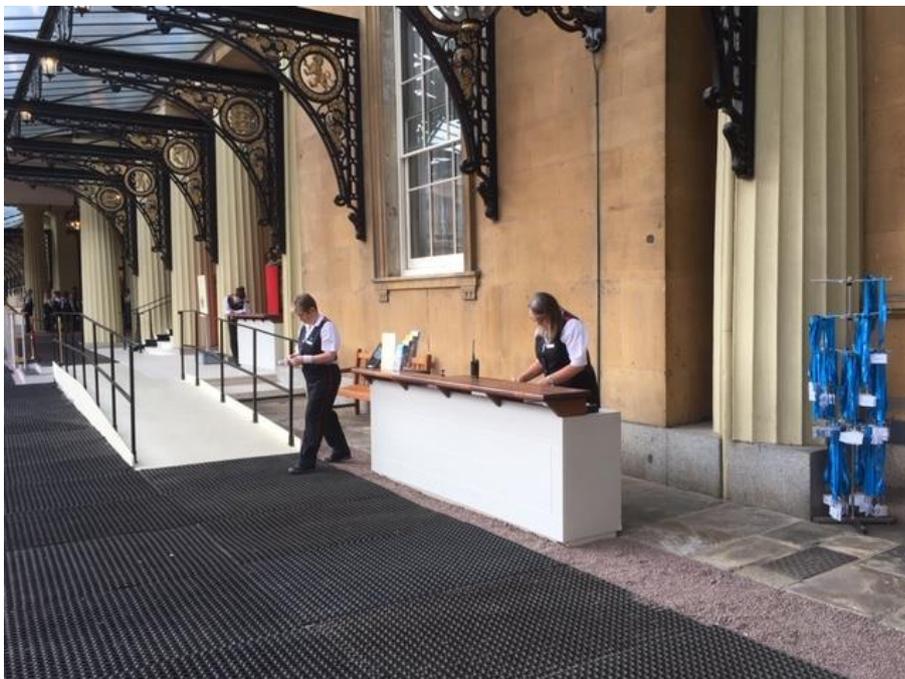
Arrivals and admission

The main visitor entrance to Buckingham Palace is on Buckingham Palace Road, there is a sign marked 'Ticket Holders Entrance'. There is a large, noisy waiting area under big tent-like covers. Background noise, from people and traffic, can make hearing difficult. If you, or someone in your party, is autistic and finds queuing difficult, please ask to speak to the Admissions Supervisor who may be able to arrange a quicker entrance.

There is an alternative, quieter entrance – **the Access Route** – for visitors with additional needs, and those who require step-free access, at the front of the Palace. **Entrance via this route must be pre-booked by contacting the Specialist Sales team in the Ticket Office on 0303 123 7324 or specialistsales@rct.uk**

Access Route admission

This entrance is quieter and calmer. You will be met at the North Centre Gate, the gate nearest to Green Park, by a warden. There is also an armed policeman positioned here. The warden will escort you across the gravel forecourt on a motorised buggy. The sound of the buggy on the gravel can be very noisy.



When you enter the Quadrangle of the Palace there is a manual security search and a metal detecting arch.

Staff will look through your bags and ask you to walk through the arch. The metal detecting arch makes a loud noise if it detects something metal. If that happens, staff will use a hand-held detector

and wave it around your body to find out what set-off the alarm. The detector should not touch your body. Often a watch or metal belt buckle will have caused the alarm to sound.

Once you have been through the security search you will be escorted into the Grand Entrance to join the main visitor route. There is a mixture of flooring from a spongy mat, a temporary metal ramp and stone floor.

Main admission

As you enter the site there is an opportunity to purchase a Guidebook, this is the first of several opportunities.

Depending on the time of your ticket you will be directed to one of two canopied waiting areas by a member of our Warden team:

Whilst in the waiting area you will be given a briefing by a Warden highlighting visit guidelines:

- no photography is allowed until you reach the garden;
- no chewing gum;
- no food or drink, other than water, is to be consumed inside;
- the lavatories are located in the garden.

Security

On a visit to Buckingham Palace you must go through a security search. This security area is located just after the covered Admissions area. It is a bright, noisy space that can get busy and always involves queuing.

There are three air-conditioning units working in the space, two of which can be felt on the visitor route.

The flooring is decking and squeaks in many places.

You must follow the instructions of the Wardens. You will be asked to put bags through an x-ray machine and all metallic items – keys, coins, mobile phones etc. – must be removed from pockets and put into your bag. You will be asked to walk through a metal detecting arch.

There is a metal strip on the floor to show you where to stand until you are directed by staff to move through the arch.



The metal detecting arch makes a loud noise if it detects something metal. If that happens, staff will use a hand-held detector and wave it around your body to find out what set-off the alarm. The detector should not touch your body. Often a watch or metal belt buckle will have caused the alarm to sound.

Once you have passed through security there is a desk where you will be asked to leave pushchairs and prams.

If you hand-in belongings, the Warden behind the desk will give you a ticket. Give this back to a Warden at the end of your visit, in the garden, and they will give you your belongings.

Multimedia distribution

You will exit the security area and walk along more decking to the multimedia tour desk. The multimedia tour tells you about the history of the Palace, the role of The Queen and her use of the State Rooms and about a number of the works of art on display, using sound and video clips. You can stop and restart the tour at any point. If you listen to the whole tour it will take you about one hour. The tour can be used with or without headphones. If used without, you should hold it like a mobile phone.



Inside the Palace

As you enter the main building, you cross a very spongy mat before walking along a long narrow corridor where there is potential for jostling. The space echoes and there can be background noise from the multimedia tour. You will exit outside again onto more decking flooring in the Quadrangle of the Palace. There is another opportunity to purchase a guidebook here. Bench seating is available before re-entering the building via the Grand Entrance.



The Grand Entrance



You go up steps to enter the Grand Entrance. On bright days there can be a significant contrast in light levels from light to dark. You must follow the route and go up the Grand Staircase – there is a dark green rope barrier at the end of the space to prevent you from going in the wrong direction. The rope barrier (not pictured) can be difficult to see because it blends in with the colour scheme.

The Grand Staircase



You will walk up a short flight of steps before the first flight of stairs on the Grand Staircase. Then turn either left or right to curve up to the first floor – it does not matter which direction you take. At the first landing, where the staircase curves, there is another dark coloured rope barrier to prevent visitors from continuing up the staircase in the wrong direction. The steps, along the curve of the staircase, are very narrow.

Throughout the State Rooms



The route through the State Rooms is one way and dark rope barriers are used to prevent visitors from going in the wrong direction.

The light levels change throughout and range from quite bright to very dim.



Flooring is mostly carpet, some of which is heavily patterned – there are floorboards at the entrance to some of the rooms and these are often squeaky.

Windows may be opened or closed and background noise can drift in from outside.

Seating is available in all rooms by asking a warden.

Reservicing renovation work is taking place at Buckingham Palace and whilst not on the visitor route it may be possible to hear the noise of this work when in the State Rooms.

The Picture Gallery



The long, narrow room has wooden bench seating along the middle. It can get very busy in here with slow moving people looking at the paintings hanging on the walls.

The Special Exhibition

The visitor route takes you through the Ball Supper Room and this year's special exhibition celebrating H.M The Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

You enter a darker space, which echoes, with an air conditioning unit to the left. You walk around the display, which is arranged in zones. There are large mirrors in here which can be disorientating. It is a one-way route, and you exit via a second doorway in the same wall that you entered by.

The Ballroom

The Ballroom is a large open space with lots of wooden bench seating.

After the Ballroom, a few of the rooms along the garden side of the Palace are visually busy with heavily patterned carpet. There is more seating available in most of these rooms. The windows, overlooking the garden, may be open with background noise drifting in.



Towards the end of the tour, after the White Drawing Room you will briefly re-enter the Picture Gallery before going downstairs to the Marble Hall. There is perspex on the top landing of the stairs.

The stairs are carpeted red and can, due to the light levels, be difficult to see. The Marble Hall echoes and is a darker space with flickering lights that have an orange tone.

Exiting the Palace

Before you exit the Palace through the Bow Room there is an opportunity to go to the Access Shop, which is located at the far end of the Marble Hall, on the right. This is a smaller, quieter shop and if you wish to use it, please ask the Warden at the end of the Marble Hall. The lighting in the shop has a flickering strobe effect. There are several free-standing display units.

When you exit through the Bow Room, there can be an intense forward light and gusts of air from outside.

As you exit there are three doors which all exit onto the same terrace. Your options are:

- Take the left-hand door and pick-up your pram or pushchair if you left it in the cloakroom.
- Take the left-hand door and return the multimedia tour. You will be asked to separate the headphones from the player.
- Take the right-hand, ramped, door to the Garden Café. Offering a selection of refreshments, including tea, coffee, juice and a choice of cakes and sandwiches. The flooring in the Café is hard gravel and decking and there can be a lot of background noise.



There are steps down from the terrace that take visitors into the garden where you follow the path along the South side to the exit near Hyde Park Corner.



The garden path is gravel.



The path takes you past the lavatories and the Garden Shop (which has lino flooring).



Lavatories

Lavatories are available at the end of the visit, in the garden. The flooring is decking and may squeak. The hand-dryers are loud and omit a bright blue light along with the hot air blast. The accessible lavatories have heavy doors and are heavily fragranced. If you require a lavatory at the start of the visit please speak to a warden.